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THE LINE AND THE STAFF

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THE LINE AND THE STAFF

By

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PREFACE

"The staff must be made more accountable."¹ "As the line grows arithmetically, the staff grows geometrically."² "Line and staff is obsolete."³ "Line-staff friction is an important inertial drag on the effectiveness of the organization."⁴ These are a sample of the many comments on the "line-staff" problem which are appearing with greater frequency in the current writings in management periodicals and publications.

As is true of the whole study of organizations and organizational theory, there appears to be a lack of common definition or understanding in the use of terms--in this case, the term "staff". These articles tend to identify "staff" as one collective group within an organization. Whereas in reality, within the genus "staff", there are many species, such as technical staff, advisory staff, and advisory and coordinating staff. Some writers refer to staffs as service, advisory,

¹Edward C. Schleh, "The Essence of Decentralization," Advanced Management, September 1959, p. 10.

²Mason Haire, "Toward a Theory of Industrial Organization," Changing Patterns and Concepts in Management (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 34.

³Gerald C. Fisch, "Line-Staff is Obsolete," Harvard Business Review, September-October 1961, p. 67.

⁴J. E. Connor, "Profiles of the Future," Business Horizons, Summer, 1961, p. 6.

coordinative, and control agencies. The distinction stems from the identification of staff units by structural alignment or function. The military use other terms such as general staff, special staff, and personal staff.

This thesis is an effort to identify the common staff units and to examine their roles in industrial organization today, with specific emphasis upon their relationships with "line" as interpreted through currently accepted organizational theory. From this base of understanding, the problems in organization which are generally associated with the line-staff friction are examined with particular reference to the attributes of organization. These attributes are the alphabet of the organizational theory language. The phrase "attributes of organization" is employed synonymously with principles of management or criteria of organization.

No apology is made for the simplicity of presentation. I feel that the greatest deterrent to communicating ideas, particularly in the academic field, lies in the complexity of presentation. The greatest sinners are the academicians who appear to write for colleagues rather than knowledge-seeking students. True motivation for this characteristic, which runs contrary to the very nature of the teaching mission of the academician, is difficult to determine. It may very well be a matter of prestige--that the stature of the individual is in direct relation to an ability to create a veil of awe about the subject through the use of jargon and multi-syllabic words. Gunning has very appropriately described this trait and devised

a method of measuring the degree of attainment by a "fog index." This thesis has been an effort in the opposite direction. It may be oversimplified in some matters, however, the price is a small one if the end objective of unmasking the line-staff farce is achieved through the presentation of the fundamentals of organizational theory without any frills and fancy accessories.

The conclusions reached are by no means completely original but include some opinions contained in recent literature on the subject.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZATION

Any study of staffs and their relationship with the line units must begin with an examination of the framework of organization within which they function.

Organization has been defined by Webster as "an act or process of bringing together or arranging related parts into a whole."⁵ In an article, Herbert A. Simon identified human organizations as "systems of interdependent activity, encompassing at least several primary groups and usually characterized, at the level of consciousness of participants, by a high degree of rational direction of behavior toward ends that are objects of common acknowledgement and expectation."⁶

These two definitions were specifically chosen because they highlight the obvious difference between organization as a structure--"arranging related parts into a whole"--and organization as management functioning within the structural framework in pursuit of the stated or implied objectives of the enterprise--"ends that are objects of common acknowledgement and expectation."

⁵Webster's Illustrated Dictionary (New York: Books, Inc., 1961).

⁶H. A. Simon, "Comments on the Theory of Organization," Administrative Control and Executive Action, ed. B. C. Lemke & J. D. Edwards (Columbus, Ohio: Chas. E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1961), p. 124.

As a synthesis of both definitions, it can be concluded that an organization is the grouping of individuals, staffing the related parts into a whole, for the purpose of achieving recognized common goals. Perhaps the earliest formation of an organization was realized when two pre-historic men joined together to hunt animals, or to move some physical object, or to provide a mutual defense. All of these possibilities involve the grouping together of parts--the pre-historic men--to achieve a common goal of hunting animals, moving objects, or mutual defense. They realized that collectively they could achieve a common goal more effectively and expediently.

It was many centuries later before man advanced beyond this stage of being all things unto himself. Charles Babbage wrote in 1832 of the apparent recognition of the concept of division of labor.

The first application of this principle must have been made in a very early stage of society; for it must soon have been apparent that more comforts and conveniences could be acquired by one man restricting his occupation to the art of making bows, another to that of building houses, a third boats, and so on. This division of labor into trades was not, however, the result of an opinion that the general riches of the community would be increased by such an arrangement: but it must have arisen from the circumstances, of each individual so employed discovering that he himself could thus make a greater profit of his labour than by pursuing more varied occupations.⁷

Down through the years, the adoption of trades led to the

⁷ Charles Babbage, "On the Division of Labour," Classics in Management, ed. Harwood F. Merrill (New York: American Management Association, 1960), p. 29.

formation of guilds and later trade associations, and on into the industrial revolution, culminating at this point in time, with the complex organizational structures of modern industry. Through this whole evolution, many changes took place in structural organization. Most authorities writing about these changes have identified the structures as they evolved at various stages as Line, Line and Staff, and Functional, or combinations of Line-Staff-Functional. These will be identified in detail in a later chapter.

The succeeding chapter will contain a discussion of the attributes or criteria of organization. These are the "footings" upon which the organizational structure is built and which support the organizational management. By way of analogy, the attributes of organization are like the words of a sentence. When the words are utilized properly in accordance with the rules of grammar, a thought is conveyed and the purpose served. On the other hand, if the words are assembled with less care or haphazardly, the end result is much less effective or even a failure.

CHAPTER II

ATTRIBUTES OF ORGANIZATION

In the beginning of this thesis, organization was described as the grouping of individuals--staffing the related parts into a whole--for the purpose of achieving recognized common goals.

Actually, as Mooney stated in the forward of his book, "Organization is as old as human society itself."⁸ This concept was highlighted with the earlier illustration of our prehistoric ancestors discovering that more could be accomplished or a common goal could be achieved more effectively and expeditiously by merging their efforts.

From the illustration, and again from the deduced definition, organizations are formed only when a purpose exists. Thus organization, like any behavior pattern, is a manifestation of activity in response to a purpose. In an industrial organization, the area to which this thesis is confined, the primary purpose or objective of the enterprise is profit. This is the motivation for organizing an industrial enterprise. However, beyond motivation, another ingredient is necessary

⁸James D. Mooney, The Principles of Organization, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. ix.

before beginning the process of organizing--a means of achieving the profit objective must exist in the form of a potentially acceptable product or service.

At this point, the seed of organization has been fertilized. An individual or a group of individuals, stimulated by the profit motive, and in possession of the means of achieving that objective, must now cultivate or develop that seed into a fully formed organization. Disregarding the problems of financing, patents, and the like, our concern is solely the pattern of organizational planning that must take place in pursuit of the objective.

Organizational planning is the process of defining and grouping the activities of the enterprise so that they may be most logically assigned and effectively executed. It is concerned with the establishment of relationships among the units so as to further the objectives of the enterprise.⁹

Attributes and Structural Organization

From this definition of organizational planning, several steps are immediately apparent. These are:

- a. Define the activities or tasks to be accomplished.
- b. Determine the organizational units necessary to perform these tasks.
- c. Assign the tasks to the organizational units.
- d. Group the units performing similar tasks into larger components.

⁹ Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure (New York: American Management Association, 1952), p. 14.

e. Define the relationships among the organizational units in both vertical and horizontal directions.

Note that these steps in organization planning pertain only to the organization structure. The reader will recall that stress was placed upon the point that organizations, as we know and commonly use the word, encompasses the two facets of structure and management.¹⁰ In this section, the discussion is confined to the structural aspects of organization. This has been described as the inanimate or static side of organization also. The literature on the subject often groups the attributes relating to structural organization and management together. Fayol's "General Principles of Management"¹¹ and Urwick's "Principles of Management"¹² are examples of such grouping. I believe that organizational theory is better understood if a distinction is made between the structural (static) and management (dynamic) aspects of organization.

The five steps in organizational planning create the structural parameters of the organization. The definition of tasks (step a) and the determination of units necessary to perform these tasks (step b) enable management to visualize the departments, divisions, down to the most basic organizational units necessary in the pursuit of company objectives.

¹⁰See page 1.

¹¹Henri Fayol, General and Industrial Management (London: Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1949).

¹²L. F. Urwick, British Management Review, Vol. VII, 1948 quoted by Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, op. cit., p. 139.

In terms of a small company at its incipient stage, these steps in planning would enable the organizer, for example, to ascertain that only the two major departments of Production and Sales were essential. This type of planning at this stage would also enable the founder to reconcile the need for further sub-division of effort with the anticipated scope of activity, complexity of operations, and so forth.

Having determined the organizational units necessary, step (c) calls for the assignment of tasks to the organizational units. This is an area which can be specifically identified with accepted attributes of organization--the assignment of responsibilities and the delegation of authority. This approaches a "grey area" between structure and management. Most writers on organizational theory state or imply that the assignment of responsibility and the delegation of authority are to the incumbent and not to the inanimate position. This is a problem of semantics and interpretation. In reality, the assignment of responsibility and authority are normally attached to the position. They remain there regardless of who fills the position. However, it is recognized that an individual is required to implement the activity, and because of this, I believe these attributes properly belong to both structure and management. In consideration of this stage of organizational planning in the case of a company being formed, the assignment of responsibility and the delegation of authority must be associated with the position (structural) in the absence of personnel. Some organizations are "people-oriented" and

reassign functions dependent upon the personalities and capabilities of individuals. However, in the usual industrial situation, this is the exception rather than the rule. Normally, the people selected to occupy a position are considered in terms of the responsibilities that must be fulfilled in the position. These attributes will be further developed under the section dealing with organizational management.

Step (d), grouping the units performing similar tasks into larger components, has been identified as part of the attribute of organization entitled homogeneous assignment.¹³ This attribute has two phases--the organizing phase and the personnel assignment phase. The organizing phase, which is of concern here, means that all functions similar in nature or composed of similar parts are grouped together to the greatest extent practicable. This tends to increase specialization (staff). However, the proper employment of specialized (staff) units enables departments directly concerned with the primary objectives of the company to increase their emphasis in that regard.

For example, in the case of a small company being formed, it was determined that the tasks assigned to the organizational units (step c) were all primarily concerned with production and sales. The time and effort requirement for indirect tasks (personnel, purchasing, etc.) were only

¹³Naval War College, Principles of Organization, 5th edition, Newport, Rhode Island, 1 June 1959, p. 48.

incidental to the direct tasks. However, as the organization grew in size, the time and effort requirements for the specialized services within the Production and Sales Departments grew to such proportions that it became necessary to group these functions of personnel, purchasing, etc., into their own respective departments. This illustrates homogeneity as it tends toward specialization, but more important, it highlights the potential advantages of grouping together specialized elements into one unit for the service of all. This, of course, is not true in all cases. However, as a general rule it can be stated that as a company grows in size and complexity, it reaches a point where it is more economical and efficient to consolidate these specialized functions rather than leave them dispersed through the organization.

Step (e), to define the relationships among the organizational units in both vertical and horizontal directions, is to me the most important of the five steps. Many writers, such as Mooney,¹⁴ define coordination as the orderly effort, to provide unity of action in the pursuit of a common purpose. He classifies this as the first principle of organization because the term expresses all the principles of organization. Note how this definition coincides with the definition of organization as used in this thesis. We might state as attributes of organization that the culmination of step (e) provides for vertical coordination and horizontal coordination. These

¹⁴Mooney, op. cit., p. 5.

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are the most important attributes. However, in this section, the implication of these attributes pertains only to organizational structure. In this context, vertical coordination refers to the formal chain of command as reflected on the organizational chart, and horizontal coordination refers to the formal relationships between organizational units across departmental lines. The major importance of these attributes comes into play through the interrelationships of the people who staff these positions. This involves the area of management, the dynamic aspects of organization, and will be discussed further under that section. Suffice it to remark at this point, that through vertical coordination, the delineation of these formal relationships establishes the chain of command, provides unity of action, defines the formal communication channels and the supervisor-subordinate relationships. It is interesting to note that one text pointed out that:

Since the word 'coordination' has various meanings and connotations, it is believed that the phrase 'correlation of action' is more expressive of the actual result desired whenever 'coordination' is listed as a principle or attribute of organization. Consequently, it should be borne in mind that when 'coordination' is used by writers on the subject of organization, 'correlation of action' is believed to be the actual meaning intended.¹⁵

Although the attributes have been identified as vertical and horizontal coordination in this paper, the word coordination is used with the intent of creating in the mind of the reader an image of organizational inter-play which may be more

¹⁵Naval War College, Principles of Organization, op. cit., p. 40.

appropriately described as "correlation of action."

Although the vertical coordination provides the chain of command and the channel of communication, it is not always the quickest channel, and in a large organization it can be disastrously long. This must be reconciled with the need for quick action and immediate response to challenging situations. The solution, of course, is the creation of formal relationships among organizational units on a horizontal plateau. Again, this is horizontal coordination.

Structurally, these attributes are illustrated in the following two figures. Figure 1 reflects the obvious difficulties and delays associated with the resolution of a problem between the Head of Unit "A" and the head of Unit "B" if the organization relied solely on vertical coordination. Figure 2 illustrates this same circumstance in an organization which has successfully employed both the attributes of vertical and horizontal coordination.

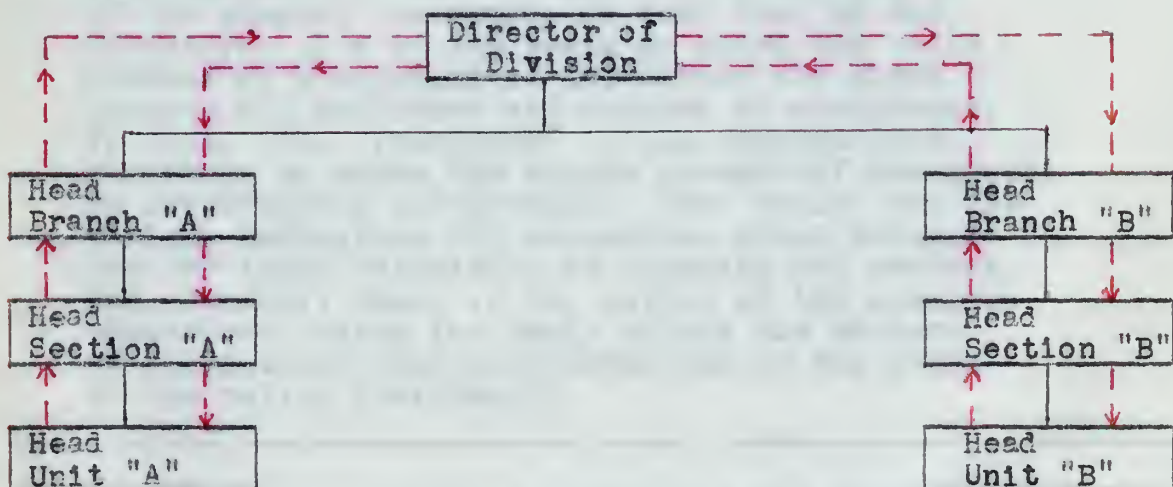


Fig. 1.--Vertical Coordination

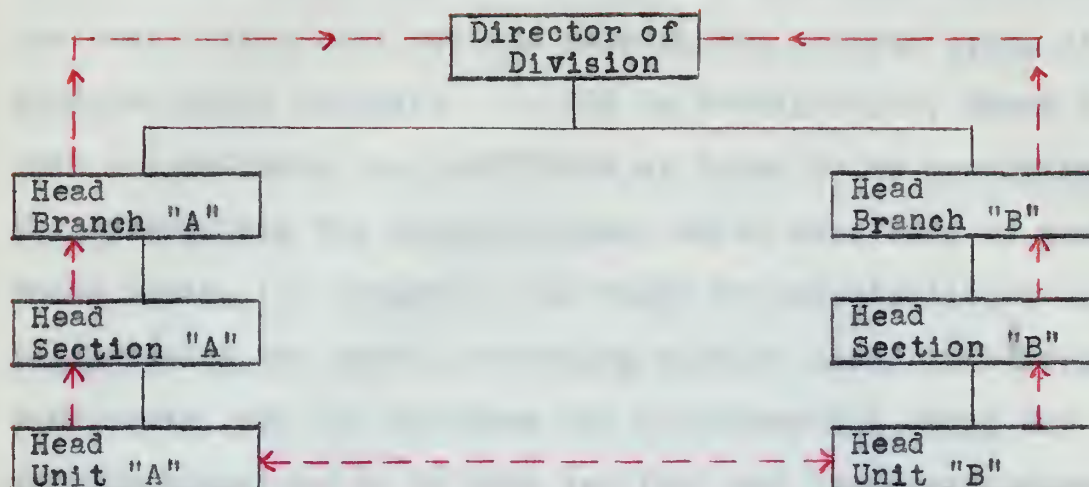


Fig. 2.--Vertical and Horizontal Coordination

Attributes and Management Organization

Organization is composed of structure and management, the static and the dynamic. Brech described management quite well when he wrote:

The nature of management is such that it needs a foundation, framework, tools, and personal action. The "foundation" can be regarded as the policy of the company concerned, as laid down by the directors; this is the basis on which the whole process of management is formulated and which governs all decisions and actions of management, in fact. The "framework" is the organization structure by which the single process of management is specifically sub-divided. The "tools" are the various techniques and procedures which managers use for their activities of planning and control. And, finally, there is the action of the managers themselves, using the tools within the pattern of responsibilities laid down, and on the basis of the policy declared.¹⁶

¹⁶ E. F. L. Brech, Organization the Framework of Management (New York: Longman's, Green and Co., 1958), p. 18.

Thus far in this chapter, the organizational structure has been fairly well moulded through the derived steps of organizational planning. To aid in recollection, these steps were (a) defining the activities or tasks to be accomplished, (b) determining the organizational units necessary to perform these tasks, (c) assigning the tasks to organizational units, (d) grouping the units performing similar tasks into larger components, and (e) defining the relationships among the organizational units in both vertical and horizontal directions. Completion of these steps creates the skeletal structure of organization that may be reflected on an organization chart.

The next facet of organization development is the transition to the dynamic stage--the staffing of the organization with personnel. This is the creation of management. Brech refers to organization as a certain pattern of responsibilities--a framework within which and by means of which the process of management can be effectively carried out. He goes on to define management as:

a social process entailing responsibility for the effective (or efficient) planning and regulation of the operation of an enterprise, such responsibility involving--(a) the installation and maintenance of proper procedures to insure adherence to plans; and (b) the guidance, integration and supervision of the personnel comprising the enterprise and carrying out its operations.¹⁷

From the description and the definition of the art and science of management, several additional steps seem readily apparent to complete this transition to the dynamic stage. The

¹⁷Ibid., p. 10.

first three steps are very closely interrelated with, or actually are extensions of, several of the steps identified with organizational structures. The next steps in our organizational planning are:

f. The assignment of individuals to organizational units. (Homogeneous assignment)

g. The assignment of tasks (responsibilities) to specific individuals in organizational units.

h. The delegation of authority to individuals commensurate with the responsibilities assigned.

i. The creation of an environment to support the proper functioning of the formal vertical and horizontal coordination, as well as to encourage the development of informal coordinative relationships consistent with the best interests of the enterprise.

j. Supervision of the planned action.

At this point it would seem appropriate to make several observations to better key the understanding of the reader to the thoughts of the author. The steps identified with the organization structure and now the organization management are by no means all-inclusive. They were selected because they represent the basic and fundamental steps in the organization process. And with these basic steps are identified the basic attributes of organization. Certainly other attributes such as balance, stability, flexibility, and so forth, are important in their own right. However, the discussion of organizational

development is purposely restricted to the basic attributes for reasons of simplicity and, more important, because the analysis of the line-staff relationships will evolve about them.

To continue the discussion of the steps in organizational development, step (f), the assignment of individuals to organizational units, is the second phase--the Personnel Phase--of the attribute of organization previously identified as homogenous assignment. Whether this stage be the initial development of the organization, an expansion or reorganization, this phase requires that personnel selection and assignments be based on interests, abilities and capabilities, to perform the homogeneously grouped tasks of the organization. In assigning an individual to a task, more efficient results will be obtained if the task requires a whole or partial utilization of a basic knowledge and skill the man already possesses. It must also be recognized when making personnel assignments that with each man's capabilities there are also physical and mental limitations. Care must therefore be exercised in placing the right man in the right job.

In summary, homogenous assignment may be defined as grouping, to the greatest extent practicable, functions and tasks that are similar in nature or composed of similar parts and that personnel are selected and assigned to these groupings in accordance with their capabilities.

It is recognized that controversy exists as to whether the differentiation and grouping of functions (homogeneity)

should be based on the ability of personnel already in or available to the organization or on the actual requirements for the proper performance of function. It is suspected that in actual practice both approaches are used, with a combination of these two techniques as the most likely to be found in business and the most effective. However, for the sake of simplicity, this discussion presumes the latter case--an organization based on actual requirements.

Step (g), the assignment of tasks to specific individuals in organizational units, is the management side of the previously discussed step (c), the assignment of tasks to organizational units. This transcends the static concept of structure (step c) and enters into the dynamic process of management in action. It concerns the assignment of tasks to individuals and therefore, the assignment of responsibility for the proper performance of each task. This concept of responsibility has been very capably defined as:

Responsibility is the act of being obligated and accountable. It may be defined as the obligation of an individual to perform the tasks assigned to him to the best of his ability in accordance with the directions of the superior executive to whom he is accountable. Obligation, an essential element of responsibility, implies a willingness to accept, for whatever rewards one may see in a situation, the burden of a given task and the risks which may attend in the event of failure.¹⁸

In one sense, organization may be thought of as a grouping of individuals and a series of tasks to be performed

¹⁸ Naval War College, Principles of Organization, op. cit., p. 55.

by these individuals. And since responsibility is associated with each task, it therefore must be accepted by the individual performing that task. It is not a collective proposition even when similar tasks are assigned to several people and each has a similar responsibility. It is the effect of organization to create individual responsibilities and assign them to individuals. This is particularly true in a joint effort. For example, consider a joint effort involving two people--one cannot make up for the lack of effort on the part of the other, and likewise, the lack of effort on the part of one cannot be attributed to the other. Their respective responsibilities require them to act jointly, but their responsibilities remain single and individual. Therefore, it can be concluded that not only does responsibility apply exclusively to individuals, but that it cannot be shared with another.

This mode of reasoning on responsibility is fundamental and considered important to the line-staff relations analysis of the succeeding chapters.

Closely allied to the attribute of responsibility is the attribute of authority (step h). One really cannot be considered in isolation of the other. The assignment of a responsibility for the performance of a task, and the accountability or the obligation to perform that task, are meaningless without the necessary authority for successful accomplishment. Authority has been described as the power of performance of

responsibility.¹⁹ In this sense, authority can be further described as a right--the right of decision and authoritative direction.

The delegation of authority is not a recently developed attribute of organization. The following quotation from the Bible is one of the earliest recorded acts of delegating authority. In this case, Moses was counselled by his father-in-law Jethro, who observed the multitudes that sought advice and judgment from Moses daily.

You are not acting wisely, his father-in-law replied. You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.²⁰

Jethro was suggesting the assignment of responsibility and the delegation of authority. The scriptures tell us that Moses

¹⁹ Alvin Brown, Organization a Formulation of Principle (New York: Hibbert Printing Co., 1945).

²⁰ The Holy Bible, Exodus, Chapter 18, Versus 17-23.

successfully implemented these attributes of organization. This is a very plain example of a superior assigning responsibilities to subordinates and delegating to these same subordinates the power of authority.

One point must be made clear. The person assigning responsibility for a task actually retains the responsibility for the successful performance of that task. For example, A assigns a task to B, who sub-divides the task and assigns them to C, D, and E. In this case, B retains responsibility for the completion of the task with respect to C, D, and E. However, A still retains responsibility for the task with respect to B, and so forth, back up the chain of command to the source of final authority within the organization. Aboard a Navy ship, the ultimate responsibility for the official activities of the officers and the men rests with the commanding officer. This fact is explained in Navy Regulations as follows:

The delegation of authority and the issuance of orders and instructions by a person in the naval service shall not relieve such person from any responsibility imposed upon him. He shall insure that the delegated authority is properly exercised and that his orders and instructions are properly executed.²¹

Delegation is to entrust to the care or management of another. In assigning or delegating a responsibility, the superior in effect relinquishes a part of his personal performance in exchange for an obligation from the subordinate for the performance of exactly that part.

²¹U. S. Navy Regulations, 1948 art. 1318.

In summary, the assignment of tasks to individuals involves the attributes of responsibility and authority. The superior by assignment of a responsibility (task) to a subordinate, which by its acceptance, carries with it an obligation or accountability for performance. In conjunction with the assigned responsibility, the superior must also delegate sufficient authority to enable the subordinate to accomplish the task. And finally, the assignment of responsibility does not relieve the superior of any responsibility for performance.

Step (1) has been cited as the creation of an environment to support the proper functioning of the formal vertical and horizontal coordination, as well as to encourage the development of informal coordinative relationships consistent with the best interests of the enterprise. This step is very broad and properly should be considered in two parts.

The first part relates directly to the attributes of vertical and horizontal coordination discussed under the structural section. These are the formal and well-defined relationships. The creation of an environment to support the proper functioning of vertical coordination is achieved through each executive giving his subordinates the proper supervision, seeing that all efforts are directed to the common goals of the enterprise, and knowing what is being done by immediate subordinates. Further, superiors should not by-pass subordinates by communicating directly with persons down in the organization, and conversely, juniors should not by-pass their immediate superiors to deal directly with higher level executives. With

respect to horizontal coordination, the dictates of economy and efficiency require that the formal avenues of lateral relations be fully exhausted before passing problems up the chain of command for decisions. These facets of the formal relationships are obvious and self-evident.

Part two, to encourage the development of informal coordinative relationships consistent with the best interests of the enterprise, has not to my knowledge been defined per se as an integral part of the attribute coordination by any of the writers on organizational theory. I consider this facet of coordination to be of prime importance to the operating efficiency of any organization. It is impossible for management specifically to define and formalize all the possible horizontal relationships that could and should exist. Therefore, the encouragement by management of subordinates to resolve problems laterally and at the lowest possible level can mean the difference between a good and excellent organization in terms of results and morale. This trait, which embodies initiative and aggressiveness, if properly managed, results in an improved decision-making process, a greater sense of accomplishment on the part of these subordinates, a faster growth rate and a greater source of executive potential, and it frees superiors to cope with more important matters.

Implementation of this procedure necessitates certain ground rules that must be observed. These apply to the formal horizontal relationships as well. First, subordinates engaging in horizontal coordination must agree on any action taken that

affects their individual areas of responsibility. Second, immediate superiors must be advised that subordinates are maintaining close cross-relations. And third, immediate superiors must be kept informed as to agreements reached.²² Failure to comply with these fundamental rules will jeopardize the success of the operation.

This brings me to the final step in the development of organization. Step (j) is the supervision of the planned action. This is synonymous with the attribute of organization normally identified as control. I feel that "supervision of the planned action" is more literal and descriptive of the attribute. Fayol described control as "seeing that everything is being carried out in accordance with the plan which has been adopted, the orders which have been given, and the principles which have been laid down."²³ In an operating situation, this definition of control coincides exactly with what I consider to be a prime concern of management. Holden, Fish, and Smith conclude that "there is nothing about an organization more important than its future."²⁴ Planning for the future is important in the scheme of things, but certainly equally important, is the need to provide a successful present upon which to build the future.

²²Naval War College, Principles of Organization, op. cit., p. 46.

²³Henri Fayol, quoted by L. Urwick, The Elements of Administration (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 105.

²⁴F. E. Holden, L. S. Fish & H. L. Smith, Top Management Organization and Control (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), p. 4.

In the beginning of this section, Brech's definition of management was cited. Elsewhere in his text, he concluded that the definition could be simplified to become:

Planning and regulating (or guiding) the activities of an enterprise in relation to its procedures, and to the duties or tasks of its personnel.²⁵

From this Brech observed that the process of planning and regulating the activities of an enterprise is composed of four essential elements: planning, co-ordination, motivation, and control.

There can be no doubt that control or supervision of the planned action is an extremely important facet of management. Plans are rarely, if ever, exact. The very nature of planning, extrapolating the future from the past, requires value judgments, best guesses, and hunches. These are tentative decisions based upon the best knowledge available. Thus as time unfolds, it is essential that the plan should be reconciled with reality, and adjustments made to compensate for the differences.

Before concluding this chapter, one point must be made clear.

There can be no such thing as a typical organizational structure! There can be examples of structures that could be found effective in a variety of circumstances; there can be certain common elements or patterns which frequently recur; but an organization structure, to be effective, must be tailor-made to the enterprise whose framework it is.²⁶

²⁵Brech, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁶Ibid., p. 19.

The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the cold. It was a sharp contrast to the warm blanket of the car. I shivered as I walked towards the entrance of the building. The air was crisp and clear, and I could see the stars in the night sky. The building was a large, imposing structure with many windows. Some of the windows were lit up, while others were dark. I walked through the entrance and into a large hall. The hall was filled with people, and I could hear the sound of their voices. I looked around and saw that the people were all dressed in formal attire. I felt a bit out of place, but I didn't say anything. I walked towards the front of the hall and saw a man in a tuxedo standing there. He looked at me and smiled. He said, "Welcome to the party. I'm glad you could make it."

I nodded and smiled back at him. He then led me to a table. The table was set with a white tablecloth and a centerpiece of flowers. There were also some drinks on the table. I looked at the menu and saw that there were many delicious dishes. I decided to order a steak and some vegetables. The waiter came to my table and took my order. He then went back to the kitchen. I sat at the table and waited for my food. The man in the tuxedo came back to my table and said, "Your food is ready. Enjoy it."

I thanked him and ate my food. The food was delicious, and I enjoyed it. I looked around the hall and saw that the party was going well. There were many people dancing and talking. I felt like I was part of something special. I looked at my watch and saw that it was late. I decided to leave. I walked towards the entrance and saw the man in the tuxedo standing there. He said, "Have a good night."

Thank you for the invitation.
I had a great time.

Summary

This chapter has been an examination of what I consider to be the basic attributes of organization. The presentation has followed the earlier distinction between the two components of organization--structure and management. I believe that organizational problems are easier to perceive if an organization can be viewed in its static form and as a dynamic process. By the very nature of the commonly accepted definitions of the attributes of organization, there has been overlap between the static and the dynamic--the structure and management. This was illustrated with the attributes of homogenous assignment, authority, responsibility, vertical coordination, and horizontal coordination.

CHAPTER III

ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF UNITS

Introduction

The founder(s) of an organization create such an enterprise with a purpose. Assuming an industrial enterprise, this purpose is the generation of a profit²⁷ or return on investment normally through the production and marketing of a product or service. Herein lies the basic area of distinction between organizational units identified as "line" and those units identified as "staff". The units which are directly concerned with the production and marketing of the product are known as the "line" units. Or more broadly speaking, if this concept were extended to cover every possible size and type of organization, those units which are directly associated with producing the revenue for an enterprise--the primary objective--

²⁷PROFIT is cited as the objective of any industrial enterprise. While this cannot be disputed as a goal, it is recognized that the degree of concentration upon this goal has been modified somewhat by two subsidiary considerations. First, with the growing size of industrial complexes, they have, as an integral part of our social system, become more cognizant of their social responsibilities. The trend has been to temper the pure profit motive as a consequence. And secondly, industry has recognized that optimizing profits in the present may have an unfavorable long range effect. For this reason, there is also a trend toward sub-optimization of current profits with the objective of greater rewards in the future when this is the case. These influences on the profit motive will not be considered in this thesis.

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are categorically recognized as "line" units. The remaining units of the enterprise which assist the "line" in the pursuit of the primary objectives are known as "staff". The "staff", therefore, is indirectly concerned with the primary objectives of the enterprise.

Organizational Structures

Organizational structures can be classified in three basic groups. These are Line, Line and Staff, and Functional.

Line Organization

Within the subject of organization, "line" is also employed in another sense. This is the "line" type of organizational structure. It is frequently referred to as the military or hierarchial type of organization. One of the important characteristics of the line structure of organization is that it is based on relative authority and responsibility rather than on the nature of the various functions performed by the organization. This usage is demonstrated later in Phase A of the hypothetical example.

Thus, there are two normal meanings of the word "line" in organizational theory. These are:

- a. The path of assigned responsibilities and delegated authority--the chain of command, and
- b. The functions that contribute directly to accomplishing the primary objectives of the organization.

Line and Staff Organization

This structure is an outgrowth of the line organization. Support functions which were common to the line departments were extracted and became the basic responsibilities of the newly formed staff departments. In this manner, the line departments were able to devote maximum attention to the primary objectives of the organization and also receive specialized advice and assistance from the staff units. This concept is illustrated in Phases B and C of the hypothetical example which follows later in this chapter.

Functional Organization

This form of organizational structure was the progeny of F. W. Taylor. From his scientific management studies at Midvale Steel, Taylor concluded that a plethora of instructions and a multiplicity of responsibilities overtaxed the capabilities of the average foreman. Taylor's solution of functional management consisted of so dividing the work of management that each shop level supervisor should have as few supervisory functions as possible to perform. The ideal would be for each supervisor to only supervise one function. The consensus is that operations conducted within a completely functional structure have not proven satisfactory and never will. The reason is that any worker performing multiple functions would have several superiors. The limitations stem from this violation of the unity of command principle and the potential inefficiency among the "grey"

Introduction

This document is a report of the results of a study conducted by the author in the field of psychology. The study was designed to investigate the effects of various factors on human behavior. The results of the study are presented in the following sections. The first section discusses the methodology used in the study. The second section presents the results of the study. The third section discusses the implications of the results. The fourth section concludes the study.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a controlled experiment. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was exposed to the independent variable, while the control group was not. The dependent variable was measured for both groups. The results of the study are presented in the following sections. The first section discusses the methodology used in the study. The second section presents the results of the study. The third section discusses the implications of the results. The fourth section concludes the study.

areas of overlap and underlap in performing the supervisory functions. However, the concept of functional supervision does have merit when integrated within a strong line and staff organization. Staff units can be considered as functional, particularly, the advisory and coordinating staff.

Staff Units Identified by Structural Alignment

At this point it will be recognized that the indirect support of the staff may take different forms as alluded to in the preface. Specifically, there are units that provide a technical service such as the Industrial Relations Department; there are units that provide an advisory service such as a "special assistant to" some company officer; and finally, there are units that provide an advisory and coordinating service such as a functional vice-president. For purposes of illustration, these have been identified as separate and individually functioning units. In actual practice, one staff department, such as the Personnel Department in a large enterprise, could provide all three services.

To better understand the formulation of these structural staff units and their relationship with the line, let us assume the development of a hypothetical company.

Phase A

The company has been recently organized. It consists of only a few employees engaged in the production and sale of "piffkins". Note that by definition there are no staff units. All the personnel are involved directly with the primary

objectives of the company. The following chart depicts the organization of the company at this time.

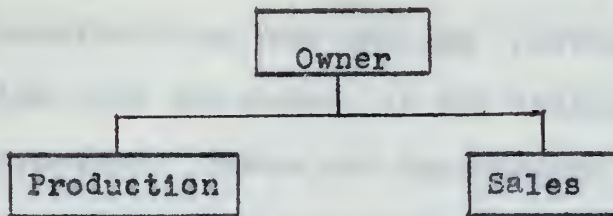


Fig. 3.--Line Organization

This is a pure line or hierarchial type of organization. The manager of production would undoubtedly be assigned the complete responsibility for the manufacture of "piffkins" and delegated by the owner the necessary line authority to carry out this responsibility. This would necessarily entail the recruitment, training, and discharge of personnel for his department; the procurement of materials necessary for production; and the maintenance of simple accounting type records necessary in the operation of the department. The manager of the sales department would also be assigned comparable responsibilities and delegated by the owner the necessary line authority to carry out these responsibilities. Each department performs all the functions necessary for the successful operation of that department.

Phase B

Several years have passed. The public in the region have enthusiastically accepted the "piffkins". Sales have increased greatly. The production machinery is operating at capacity. The managers of the production and sales departments

now find that the many petty details of handling personnel matters, buying materials, and maintaining records are restricting them from devoting the time necessary to their primary tasks of manufacturing and selling "piffkins". After discussing this problem with the owner, it was decided to re-organize the company structure. Three new departments would be created to handle the functions of personnel, purchasing, and accounting. The people who had been engaged in these activities in the Production and Sales Departments were to be transferred to their respective new Departments. Note that by definition, these people and their new departments are not directly concerned with the primary objectives of the company. They are now designated as "staff" for they are providing a service to the "line". The new organization chart of the company resembles the following.

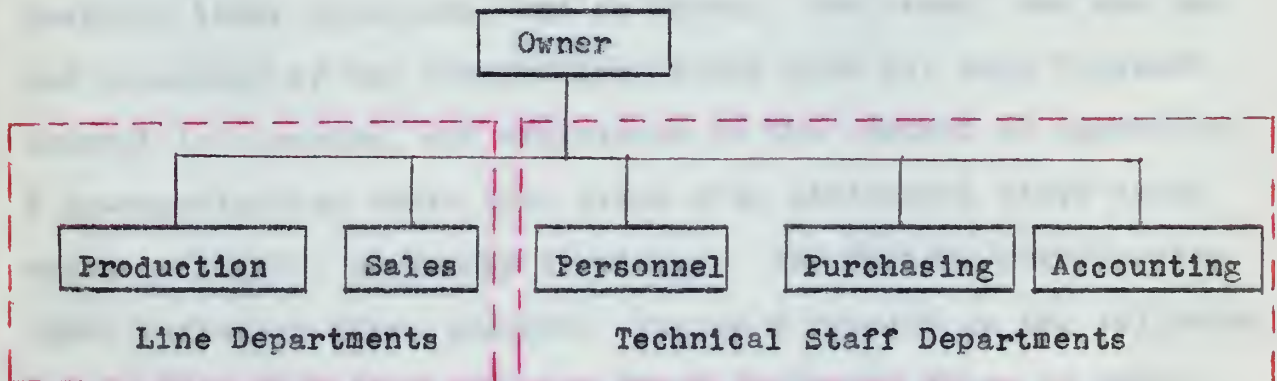


Fig. 4.--Line and Staff Organization

These are the first "staff" units in the company. Many authorities on the subject describe them as "service units."²⁸

²⁸Keith Davis, "Frictions in Human Relations, A Study of Staff-Line Relationships," Business Horizons, December 1956, p. 44.

The first step in the process of developing a new product is to identify a market need. This is often done through market research, which can be conducted in a number of ways. One way is to conduct a survey of potential customers, asking them about their needs and preferences. Another way is to observe how people use existing products and identify areas for improvement. A third way is to consult with experts in the field, such as scientists or engineers, who can provide insights into new technologies and their potential applications. Once a market need has been identified, the next step is to develop a concept for a new product that addresses this need. This involves brainstorming ideas and selecting the most promising one. The concept should be based on a clear understanding of the market need and should be feasible in terms of technology and cost. Once a concept has been developed, the next step is to create a prototype of the product. This can be done using a variety of methods, depending on the nature of the product. For example, a physical prototype can be created using 3D printing or CNC machining. Alternatively, a digital prototype can be created using computer-aided design (CAD) software. The prototype is used to test the concept and to identify any problems or areas for improvement. Once the prototype has been tested and refined, the next step is to develop a business plan for the new product. This plan should outline the market strategy, the production process, and the financial requirements for the project. It should also include a timeline for the development and launch of the product. Once a business plan has been developed, the next step is to secure funding for the project. This can be done through a variety of sources, including venture capitalists, angel investors, and crowdfunding. Once funding has been secured, the next step is to begin production of the product. This involves sourcing materials, hiring workers, and setting up a manufacturing facility. The production process should be closely monitored to ensure that the product is being manufactured to the highest quality standards. Once production has begun, the next step is to launch the product in the market. This involves creating a marketing campaign to promote the product and to attract customers. The marketing campaign should be tailored to the target market and should include a variety of promotional activities, such as advertising, public relations, and sales promotions. Once the product has been launched, the next step is to monitor its performance in the market. This involves tracking sales, customer feedback, and market trends. If the product is not performing well, it may be necessary to make adjustments to the marketing campaign or to the product itself. If the product is performing well, it may be necessary to consider expanding the product line or entering new markets.



Fig. 1. The product development process.

There are two main types of product development: *incremental* and *radical*. Incremental product development involves making small improvements to existing products, while radical product development involves creating entirely new products. Both types of product development can be used to create successful new products, but they require different strategies and resources.

¹For more information on product development, see the following references: [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31] [32] [33] [34] [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] [41] [42] [43] [44] [45] [46] [47] [48] [49] [50] [51] [52] [53] [54] [55] [56] [57] [58] [59] [60] [61] [62] [63] [64] [65] [66] [67] [68] [69] [70] [71] [72] [73] [74] [75] [76] [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] [82] [83] [84] [85] [86] [87] [88] [89] [90] [91] [92] [93] [94] [95] [96] [97] [98] [99] [100].

However, I believe that a more descriptive title is "technical staff departments" since other types of staff units also perform services. The relationships between Production-Sales and Personnel-Purchasing-Accounting is one form of what is often described as line-staff relationship.

Phase C

The demand for "piffkins" has extended beyond the regional market. Sales have increased manyfold. New plants have been built in other geographic areas. The company has incorporated. More personnel have been added to fully staff the enterprise. The scope of the activity is such that the owner cannot personally coordinate the decentralized operation as he had the five departments in the past. Other new problems arose in the form of legal matters, financing expansion, real estate acquisition, marketing and distribution, economic forecasting, labor relations, and so forth. The owner, who was now the president of the corporation, found need for more frequent counsel in planning, and assistance in the control of operations. A re-organization again took place with additional staff units added to fulfill necessary functions. The revised organization chart reflected these changes. Figure 5 appears on the following page. Note that there are now three different types of staff units in our organization. In essence, these represent three different line-staff relationships. The first, as was true in Phase B, is the technical staff assisting the line in pursuit of the primary objectives of the company.

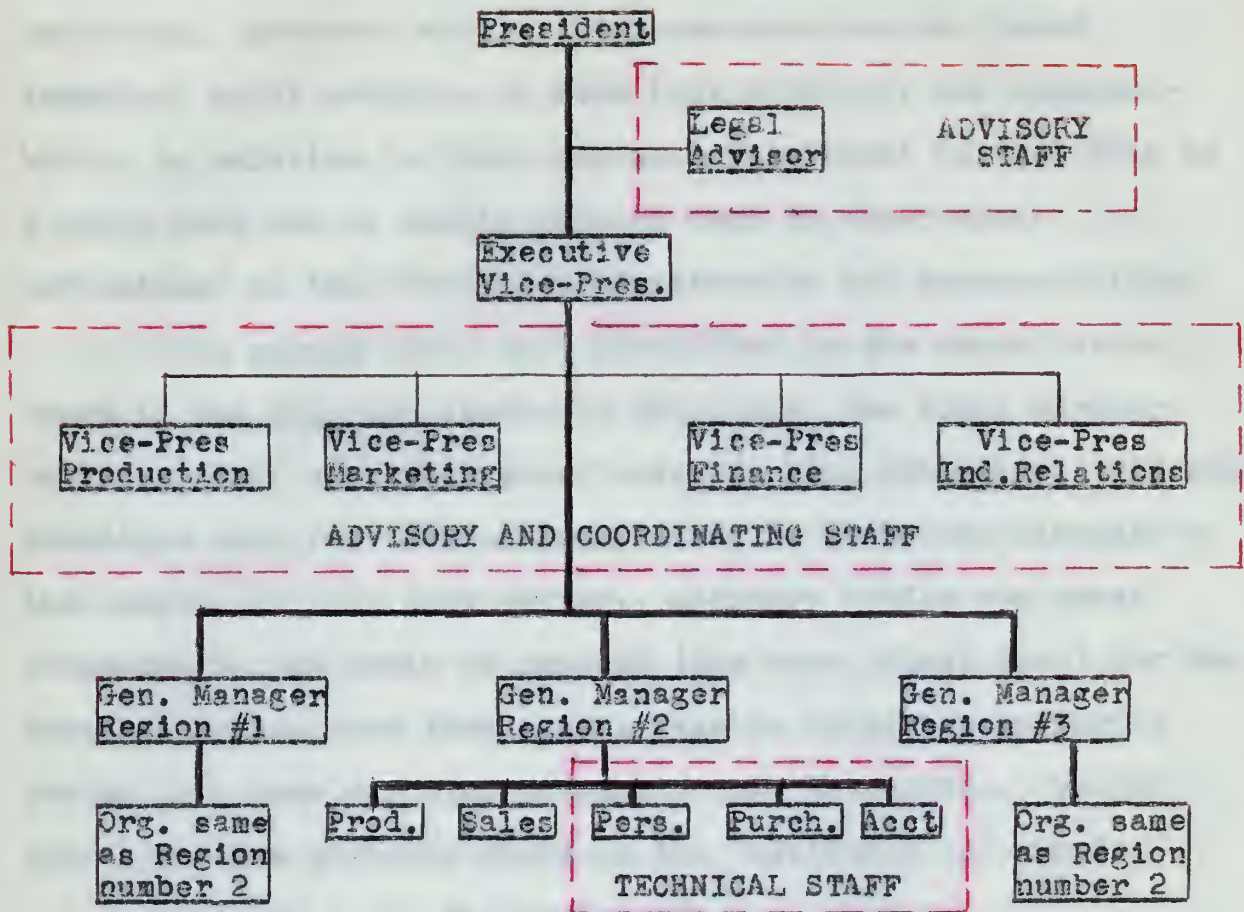


Fig. 5.--Line and Staff Organization

Before passing on to the second type of staff unit an important point must be clarified. The heavy black line on the organization chart represents the chain of command, the flow of delegated line authority downward and the flow of the responsibility for the performance of assigned tasks upward. Most writers on this subject make the distinction that the "staff" does not have any line authority or responsibility. They are referring to direct authority and responsibility for the primary

objectives of the enterprise--in this case, it is production and sales. However, within their own departments, these technical staff managers do have line authority and responsibility in relation to their assigned functional tasks. This is a point that can be easily glossed over in theoretical reflections on the attributes of authority and responsibility.

The second staff unit identified on the organization chart is the advisory staff--in this case, the legal advisor. Advisory staff personnel never have any line authority. Charting technique requires that advisory staff be connected directly to the company officer they advise. Advisory staffs are never connected to the chain of command (the heavy black line) for the specific reason that they cannot receive delegated authority nor do they have any line authority unto themselves. Urwick identified the Advisory Staff as the "assistant to" who is

essentially a man who represents his chief in matters of administrative detail. His functions are limited to study, research, analysis, recommendation and, above all, to helping his chief to get things done by handling the publication of instructions. . . . He has no executive duties.²⁹

The third type of staff unit on the revised organization chart of the hypothetical corporation is the advisory and coordinating staff. Many authorities refer to this staff as the "control" staff.³⁰ It is an adaptation of the military "general

²⁹L. F. Urwick remarks to the AMA Survey quoted by Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, p. 63.

³⁰Davis, op. cit., p. 44.

staff." As demonstrated with the hypothetical corporation, this is a staff unit that is more frequently utilized with an increase in size and complexity of an organization. As the name implies, this staff unit has advisory and coordination responsibilities. Normally these positions are filled with older, experienced company officers whose knowledge of company operations ranges over the fixed departmental lines. From this vantage point, this group is able to advise and counsel the chief executive in planning within the scope of their individual functional areas. When these company officers have assigned functional responsibilities they are also empowered with delegated authority to act in the name of a line superior across company lines and within their functional specialty. For example, in the hypothetical example, the Vice-President Finance would probably have been delegated authority to coordinate financial matters among the operating departments, particularly, the Accounting Departments of all regional branches.

Brech describes this staff position as a "general staff officer (who) has no authority or responsibility in his own right at all. He is little more than an extension of the personality of the executive he serves . . . and in this capacity he dispenses the authority of his chief and discharges also his responsibilities."³¹

Thus, in summary, the three forms of common staff units are (a) advisory, (b) technical, and (c) advisory and

³¹Brech, op. cit., p. 16.

coordinating. Advisory staff functions purely as an advisor to a staff or line official of the company. In this capacity, they are never assigned line responsibilities or given line authority. The technical staff is a service department or section at the operating level of the organization which assists the line departments in pursuit of the primary objectives of the enterprise. Within their own departments, the technical staff managers are in the chain of command and therefore have line authority commensurate with their assigned responsibilities within their staff departments. The advisory and coordinating staff are the "general staff" at a level superior to the operating departments. They are sometimes referred to as functional executives, normally with the assigned responsibilities of advising top management in their "functional" areas as well as coordination among the operating departments in these same functional areas.³²

It is pointed out that this presentation of common staff units as shown in the hypothetical example has been highly simplified to illustrate the relative positions of these staff units in the normal scheme of organizational structure, as well as to highlight their fundamental roles and missions.

Staff Units Identified by Function

Some text books on this subject distinguish between

³² This concept of common staff units was derived from the U. S. Naval War College publication Principles of Organization, 5th edition, 1 June 1959, Newport, Rhode Island.

types of staff units by function. For example, one states that a major consideration in the set-up of a staff agency is the determination of its proper status in the organization--its functions, objectives, limits of authority, and relationships with other departments and agencies. In this regard, there appear to be four more or less well-defined bases from which to choose, either individually or in appropriate combination: Control basis, Service basis, Coordinative basis, and Advisory basis.³³

Control agencies (staffs) are "expected to conceive needs, crystallize objectives, formulate and develop required plans, methods, and means of control, follow results, and take all appropriate measures necessary to insure that the ends desired by management are actually achieved."³⁴ These staffs do exercise a degree of control over certain aspects of the operation, such as cost control, standards, budgetary control, and so forth. Although the departments or sections performing these duties are at the operating level and therefore within the category previously identified as technical staff, the distinction is made from the other operating level staff units on the basis of function, in this case--control. The authors extend the "control" basis concept to include in companies organized on a product-division basis, the "

necessary functional coordination and control over those aspects of manufacturing, marketing, and engineering common to all divisions. In many cases, such staff departments are concerned with functions which are inherent responsibilities of the line organization and from which the latter cannot appropriately be relieved. . . . It is therefore customary to set up a qualified staff agency to exercise an overriding functional

³³Holden, Fish, and Smith, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁴Ibid., p. 39.

responsibility and accountability for seeing that the desired objectives are achieved.³⁵

This aspect of control is comparable to what had been earlier identified with the advisory and coordinating staff.

Service agencies (staffs) are established "to relieve each of the operating departments of the necessity of performing some function common to all, and, through the assignment of a single well-qualified agency, to secure the advantages of specialized attention, better service, closer coordination and control, and usually lower costs."³⁶ This description of the service staff coincides with the technical staff.

Co-ordinative agencies (staffs) are sometimes "set-up to co-ordinate and handle functions in which two or more departments have a joint interest."³⁷ Examples of co-ordinative staff departments would be the Production Planning Department or the Order and Distribution Department. This breakdown of a staff unit would again categorically be grouped with the previously identified technical staff.

Advisory agencies (staffs) "render specialized advice and counsel to management upon request. Such agencies normally have no directional, administrative, or control functions, but give authoritative opinions when asked, and often bring to management attention developments of interest within their respective fields."³⁸ This group would include such activities as Legal,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

Economic, and Public Relations. These staff units are identical to what had been identified as advisory staff.

TABLE 1

CROSS REFERENCE TABLE OF STRUCTURAL
AND FUNCTIONAL STAFF UNITS

Structural Staff Unit	Structural Position	Functional Staff Unit ^a	Common Illustration
Technical	Operating level	Service	Purchasing
		Control	Industrial Engineering
		Coordinative	Production Planning
Advisory	Special Assistant	Advisory	Legal Public Relations
Advisory and Coordinating	General Staff	Advisory	Vice-Pres. Finance
		Coordinative	Vice-Pres. Finance

^aIdentified as agencies by Holden, Fish, and Smith.

In the study of organizational theory, one of the greatest problems seems to be semantics or the multiplicity of slightly different interpretations of concepts by the reputable writers on the subject. This chapter has been an effort to define "line" and "staff" and the three basic types of organizational structures in commonly accepted terms. The principal part of this chapter, however, has been an original effort to bring together and cross-reference the identification

of staff units by structural alignment and function.

Before leaving this chapter on Organizational Staff Units, there is one final observation that should be made which relates to a trend away from the limitations and inflexibility imposed by current theory. This is presented in terms of staff units by structural alignment. Recall that "advisory and coordinating staff" by theory can only advise superiors and coordinate within their functional area among lesser operating units under delegated authority of a line superior and in his name only. There is a very fine line that exists between coordinative authority and line authority over subordinates. The theoretical distinction is that the corporate staff officer (advisory and coordinating staff) is acting in the name of the line superior. Theoretically, the chief executive cannot delegate to a corporate staff officer authority to act in his own name. This is purely academic. In actual practice, the relationship between the corporate staff officer, who is organizationally superior, and the operating branch or department manager, who is the recipient of this coordinating action, is normally determined by the personality and other characteristics of the two men. Many corporations have recognized the absurdity of this theoretical limitation and have assigned to corporate staff officers responsibility, and authority to act in their own names, in functional areas.

For example, the Comptroller of the Texaco Corporation, a corporate staff officer, has complete responsibility for the financial function and complete authority over all corporate

personnel in finance departments. His authority preempts that of a decentralized plant manager over the financial personnel of that plant.³⁹ As another example, the Comptroller of the Martin-Marietta Company, a corporate staff officer, has overriding authority over all decentralized branch managers with respect to the operations of the branch comptroller.⁴⁰

These are two of many possible examples of corporate practice which does not conform to the organizational theory pertaining to staff units. These represent a trend toward eliminating the limitation and inflexibility imposed by theory. And equally as important, this trend does not violate the basic attributes of responsibility and authority.

Thus far in this thesis, organization has been defined, the fundamental attributes of organization were examined and discussed, and lastly, the various forms of staffs have been identified by function and structural alignment. The purpose of this lengthy introduction was to give the reader a primer education in organizational theory in order to better understand the analysis of the line-staff problems which follow in the next chapter.

³⁹Address by Mr. G. Rankin, Comptroller, Texaco Corp. to the Navy Financial Management Class 1962, The George Washington University.

⁴⁰Address by Mr. Yorick, Comptroller, Martin-Marietta Co., to the Navy Financial Management Class 1962, The George Washington University.

CHAPTER IV

LINE-STAFF PROBLEMS

Introduction

Koontz and O'Donnell best summarized the line-staff situation when they wrote:

Much confusion has arisen both in literature and in management practice as to what line and staff are, and the results of this confusion have more than semantic significance. There is probably no other single area of management which in practice causes more difficulties, more friction, and more loss of time and effectiveness.⁴¹

Using the foundation of organizational theory developed in the first three chapters as a background and as a point of departure, the remainder of this thesis will be devoted to an examination of the line-staff problems.

The initial point to be understood and one to be kept clearly in mind is that the staff concept is military in origin. Prussian military leaders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are generally credited with being the originators of the staff concept. Evidence of staff work, however, has been traced as far back as the seventeenth century campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden.

⁴¹Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, Principles of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1959), p. 135.

Military history provides an overview of the development of the staff concept. In the early days of the organized military, campaigns were conducted in relatively confined areas and battles were fought within the physical view of the commander. Strategy was determined on the battlefield and tactics were dictated by the vagaries of the combat situation. Logistics was the responsibility of all officers. Everyone was a generalist, there were no specialists.

As time passed, the armies grew larger, weapons more devastating, campaign areas broadened, and communications improved, all of which necessitated improvements in methods and refinements in techniques. It became necessary to devise strategy before the enemy was sighted. Combat areas which extended beyond the physical sight of the commander made better coordination an imperative. Logistic problems, such as, feeding and sheltering the troops, and insuring a continuous supply of the means of war grew in importance. It was beyond the capability of the military commander to cope with the details that were the products of size and complexity. This condition gave birth to the "general staff" to assist the commander in planning and operations, and to the quartermaster to oversee the problems of logistics.

Dale and Urwick commented on the general staff as follows:

In the use of general staff officers with troops, the armies of the world have invented and developed a device for unloading the detailed aspects of

commanding from the commander himself. It is a device which works.⁴²

And another author describing the role of the general staff wrote the following:

Thus, while the general staff does not absorb any of the prerogatives of command, it owes its existence to the fact that size and complexity of organization and the problems resulting make it physically impossible for any one person to do all the planning, coordinating and supervising indispensable to intelligent command. To perform these tasks the commander of any large unit must have a general staff which as a body acts as his alter ego, greatly enlarging his capacity to command but without taking away from him any of his attributes of command.⁴³

Without further belaboring the development of the staff concept in the military, it is apparent that the basic distinction between line and staff is command. The function of the line officer is to command troops and function of the staff officer is to advise and render the necessary services and support to enable the line officer more to effectively conduct and prepare for combat operations.

It can be readily seen that there is a definite parallel pattern in the development of staff in civilian industry and the military. The hypothetical company created in the preceding chapter offers an excellent and simple example of this. The growth and complexity of the company was such that specialized services were necessary to support the primary efforts of production and sales.

⁴²Ernest Dale and Lyndall Urwick, Staff in Organization (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1960).

⁴³O. L. Nelson, National Security and the General Staff (Washington, D. C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), p. 573.

Perhaps the most widely held definition of line and staff in industry is the "line functions are those which have direct responsibility for accomplishing the objectives of the enterprise" and that staff "refers to those elements of the organization that help the line to work more effectively in accomplishing the primary objectives of the enterprise."⁴⁴ This was the basis used in developing the hypothetical company.

This is the classical approach. The line in the military is responsible for the prime mission of combat readiness and the staff plays the secondary role of support. In our hypothetical company, the line was responsible for the prime mission of production and sales--the revenue producers--and the staff played the supporting role of specialized service.

Misconceptions of Staff Usage

This is the classical approach. This is the black and white of academic thinking on organization. But does reality support the classical approach? I think not. Hulme describes the situation as "the line-staff muddle."⁴⁵ Hulme contends that much of the problem can be directly linked to common faults in line-staff usage, such as:

- a. That all members of a department doing work of a staff nature are staff people.

⁴⁴ Koontz and O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴⁵ Robert D. Hulme, "Resolving the Line-Staff Muddle," Advanced Management, Nov. 1959, pp. 27-29.

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b. That line and staff are opposites in meaning.

c. That staff people are without authority, and can advise only.

d. That staff people are absolved of all responsibility.⁴⁶

Assuming these misconceptions to be true, and I believe they represent a consensus, a more detailed examination is in order.

The first point alleges "that all members of a department doing work of a staff nature are staff people." In the discussion of organizational theory, it was developed that the functions of staff were to advise, coordinate, and provide a service to the line units. This is the work of a staff nature. It would be generally accepted that in our hypothetical company, the Sales and Production departments are Line. Now, as the Line units, do they perform any staff functions? It would be a remarkable company indeed, if there was not close liaison between these two line departments. Sales and Production must work in close harmony. Otherwise, Production would be misdirecting the company efforts through over-production or under-production of stock items. Conversely, Sales could very likely devote an unwarranted amount of effort in promoting items with the smallest profit margin. Production cannot work in a vacuum. It must learn from Sales personnel the trends in buying habits of the public and modify production schedules and introduce new products accordingly. Raymond Villers made the following

⁴⁶Ibid.

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interesting observation on the functions of the Sales Department.

It is unfortunately not exceptional to witness situations in which the sales department is sincerely convinced that its sole function is to find customers and sell them the goods. This concept, if it has ever been a valid one, is completely obsolete. The sales department is expected to sell, but also to provide information and data needed for product design, cost-reduction programs, and inventory or production planning, to mention only a few activities which are distinct from, but closely related to, the sales effort.⁴⁷

These facts are very self-evident. Actually, the attribute of horizontal coordination, formal and informal, should cope with these very problems. But more important is the recognition that each department renders a service to the other, advice is exchanged, and the sales and production efforts are coordinated. These are "staff" functions performed within "line" units. Therefore, are we to conclude that these are staff people? Obviously, the answer is no. However, it is apparent that there is no absolute--no black and white--in the definitions of line and staff. The difference is one of degree. Implementation of the attribute of horizontal coordination requires a degree of staff work throughout the organization. Or as Hulme wrote, "there becomes a little 'staffiness' in all workers or departments."⁴⁸

The second point "that line and staff are opposites in meaning" is comparable to the Aristotlean logic that "everything is either A or non-A." The problem with this logic is the

⁴⁷Raymond Villers, Dynamic Management in Industry (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1960).

⁴⁸Hulme, op. cit.

identification of "A". "A" to one person may not be "A" to another, or, what we identify as "A" today may not be what we identify as "A" tomorrow. In the industrial situation, these same problems exist. Similar organizations may identify their Line departments differently. For example, it is common for the Finance department to be Line in one organization and Staff in another. Further, a change in emphasis within the organization through policy, procedure, technology, or whatever, may be sufficient to change the designation of one department from staff to line or vice versa. For example, take the possibility of an organization that was solely involved in manufacturing which, through merger or expansion, developed a strong Research department. The organization then discovered that leasing patents on processes developed in the Research department was equally as profitable as manufacturing. (Recall that by definition, those departments directly contributing to the primary objective of the organization--the generation of profits--are Line departments). In this situation, Research must be considered as much Line as the Production department. These two examples illustrate that (1) the designation of line and staff departments is a matter of interpretation and can vary among comparable organizations, and (2) that a change in emphasis within an organization can change such designations.

The last two points are interrelated and will be considered together--"that staff people are without authority and can advise only," and "that staff people are absolved of all responsibility." (Note that in this context, responsibility is

synonymous with accountability as discussed under the attributes of organization). These two points are absurd for several reasons. First, in any organization, everyone has a superior and therefore, regardless of the organizational unit of the individual, there is an identifiable chain of command between that individual and the chief executive. Secondly, everyone in the organization has a job to do--an assigned task. Under the discussions of the attributes of organization, responsibility and authority, it was clearly developed that the assignment of a task was the assignment of responsibility for the performance of that task regardless of organizational unit. The individual accepting the task becomes accountable or responsible to his superior for the proper performance of that task. It was also clearly defined that the necessary authority must be delegated down the chain of command to whatever level necessary to become commensurate with assigned responsibility. This relationship of authority and responsibility is basic to the success of any organization, and success dictates that it exist as required throughout the organization regardless of whether the department is line or staff.

The confusion over these points stems from a distorted interpretation of the original principle which held that staff people were without authority over the "line" functions and therefore, had no responsibility in this area. This is a truism. Department A, line or staff, cannot exercise authority over a function of Department B unless a common superior delegates such authority along with responsibility for that function. (Another

facet of this point will be examined later under the discussion of the problem that "line does not give the staff enough authority"). Thus, a simple application of the basic attributes of organization clearly indicate the erroneous usage of points c and d--that staff people are without authority and absolved of all responsibility.

Examination of these misconceptions certainly seems to bear out the image of the "line-staff muddle" referred to by Hulme. Perhaps this discussion may have clarified the issue somewhat.

Line-Staff Conflicts

At any rate, to proceed with the analysis, what are some of the fundamental problems in the line-staff relationships? Why do both line and staff managers sometimes come to regard each other as natural opponents and often present a common front in their attempts to justify their own actions and discredit the other? An immediate reaction might be that this condition should not exist because the staff units are only added to an organization to augment the line. On the other hand, these specialists are brought into an organization because of a superior ability within a restricted area, and therefore, it is possible that resentment could develop through the realization by the line that not only is the staff taking over many of their functions, but top management believes the staff to be more competent to perform them. This could well be the

original tap root of the conflict between line and staff.

Louis Allen studied the current causes of conflict between the line and the staff, and listed his findings of common complaints as follows:

The Line Viewpoint of the Staff Organization

- a. Staff tends to assume line authority.
- b. Staff does not give sound advice.
- c. Staff steals credit.
- d. Staff fails to keep the line informed.
- e. Staff fails to see the whole picture.

The Staff Viewpoint of the Line Organization

- a. Line does not make proper use of staff.
- b. Line resists new ideas.
- c. Line does not give staff enough authority.⁴⁹

Before discussing each of these complaints in more detail, it should be pointed out that line-staff relations in many organizations are quite harmonious. These complaints represent a consensus of the causes of conflict where conflict does exist.

The Line Viewpoint

Staff tends to assume line authority. Many line managers

⁴⁹ Louis A. Allen, "Improving Staff and Line Relationships," Studies in Personnel Policy, No. 153 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, Inc., 1956) reprinted in Koontz and O'Donnell, op. cit., pp. 191-131.

feel that a basic cause of friction is the failure of staff to recognize its place. Line managers realize that our accounting system of profit and loss makes them directly accountable for results and therefore they resent the intrusion of the staff in their operations for which the staff is not held accountable. The line feels that the staff tries to tell them what to do and this encroachment represents the staff tendency to assume line authority. In his discussion, Allen cited the following example of this complaint.

In a candy company, the sales manager pointed to a small sticker advertising a statewide charitable appeal. "These go on every box of candy we sell in this state during the next two weeks," he said. "The public relations manager talked the president into it without consulting me. It might be a good idea from a public relations viewpoint, but I think I should make this kind of decision not a staff man."⁵⁰

It is assumed that this was a small candy company and that the president was the common superior of both the public relations man and the sales manager. An analysis of this situation reveals that not only did the sales manager arrive at an erroneous conclusion but that several attributes of organization were violated. First, the public relations man could not make the decision. He undoubtedly promoted the advantages of such a program but the president decided to implement the sticker campaign. Second, the practice of horizontal coordination is clearly lacking. The fault apparently lies with the "line"--specifically, the president. It was his responsibility to create an environment that would direct (formal) or encourage

⁵⁰Ibid.

(informal) lateral relations within his organization. Or, even accepting the remote possibility that the public relations man should deal directly with the president on this matter, the president then violated the vertical coordination attribute. In this case, either the president failed to make clear that the decision was his when the direction to begin the sticker campaign was made known to the sales manager, or the president may have relied upon the public relations man to advise the sales manager that the stickers should be packaged with the candy. In either case, the president did not adhere to sound management practice and utilize the communication channel which parallels the chain of command--vertical coordination.

However, the staff man was not without fault and contributed, knowingly or otherwise, to the situation leading to this complaint. But staff involvement was only contributory, the prime cause of this situation must be accepted by the line for failure properly to implement the basic attributes of horizontal and vertical coordination.

In connection with this complaint of the staff tending to assume line authority, John Connor recently made the following observation:

Efforts are being made to professionalize business. One of these efforts has been the encouragement of a broad view of a staff assignment. Each staff employee is encouraged to . . . "think big". If the staff man "thinking big" happens to be in industrial relations, his new idea may concern the way a line organization should handle its wage earners. However, someone in the line organization may feel that he can properly handle relations with his own wage earners. Any improvement he himself devises is easily accepted since it results from

self-criticism. However constructive, suggestions from the staff employee do not have the advantage of being self-criticism and consequently are often less accepted. Perhaps the most important failure in the allocation of human resources is this conflicting responsibility for corporate functions. In effect, management frequently assigns two persons to the same task, not as a team but opponents.⁵¹

Staff does not give sound advice. Many line managers complain that the staff people come up with ideas that are not always fully considered, well-balanced, and soundly tested. These staff people are often thought of as being too academic, unrealistic, and theoretical. Several reasons are offered by the line to justify this attitude. For instance, since staff is not held accountable for ultimate results, some staff managers show a tendency to propose new ideas without thinking them through. Such a situation might be illustrated by the staff taking over a complete program used by another company without modifying or adapting it to the peculiarities of their company or locale. Another contributing factor to this line complaint is the tendency of the staff to use confusing technical or professional jargon.

There is no doubt that these complaints are justified in many cases. However, let us examine them more closely in terms of good management practice. The staff units at fault have been assigned the responsibility for giving counsel and advice. The complaints stipulate that the quality of the advice is poor or given in such language as to be of limited value to

⁵¹Connor, op. cit., p. 8.

the line units. The principal guilt must again be assigned to the management (line) for accepting mediocracy in the performance of a task. Certainly a machinist would not be retained if his work were inferior, nor would an accountant be continued in employment if his work failed to meet the desired standards. Superiors, line or staff, who permit shoddy performance of a task by their subordinates are equally at fault. Granted that this is an area less finite than the work of a machinist or an accountant, and at a much higher level organizationally, nevertheless, there must be a common superior who has the responsibility for the performance and coordination of both departments. When this situation exists, there is insufficient attention being paid to the attribute of control.

Control is the analysis of present performance in the light of fixed goals and standards, in order to determine the extent to which accomplishment measures up to executive orders and expectations.⁵²

Staff steals credit. This complaint seems to center around an alleged tendency of staff units to assume credit for programs when they are successful and to lay blame on the line when they are not. Examples can be given to both support or to discredit this complaint. It is conceivable that a potentially successful plan devised by the staff could be rendered ineffective through poor implementation by the line units. Further, a successful program developed exclusively by

⁵²Marshall E. Dimock, The Executive in Action (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 217.

the staff must naturally reflect credit upon the staff, and conversely, a poor plan so developed must remain the responsibility of the staff.

In a well-organized company where this sort of complaint is non-existent, the coordination of the line and staff units is the successful catalyst which prevents such a situation. For example, a staff unit, such as Management Engineering staff, conducting a systems analysis must work in harmony with the line units to develop the optimal system. A text on systems and procedures recommends to the Management Engineer gathering facts for a systems study that "every interview is designed to produce facts and gain a friend to whom the analyst can return on a later assignment."⁵³ This counsel epitomizes the type of relationship that should exist between the line and the staff.

With respect to the attributes of organization, a complaint of this type can only flourish when management has not created an environment that encourages lateral informal relations (horizontal coordination). Of a more serious nature, this complaint would indicate that management is too detached from operations if an organizational unit is able to claim credit for something to which it is not entitled or should rightly share with another unit. Control and supervision of the planned action within such an organization must be very weak.

⁵³Armond L. Mettler, "The Systems Study," Systems and Procedures Victor Lazzaro (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), p. 40.

Staff fails to keep the line informed. Line managers complain that staff people have a tendency to work with line subordinates without the knowledge of line superiors. Allen cited the following example to illustrate the point:

In a chemical company, for example, the training department installed a job training program in three production departments before letting the production superintendent know what they were doing. In the superintendent's eyes, the fact that they had gained his consent to introduce a general training program did not warrant their starting this new activity without informing him. "I first knew that I was doing job training when the plant manager complimented me on it," said the production superintendent. "I realized the training people are doing a good job for me, but I'd like them to let me know about it too."⁵⁴

This superintendent has a problem, not because the staff failed to keep him informed, but because he did not know what was going on in his own department. This situation was aggravated when the superintendent's superior was more cognizant of activity in the production department than the superintendent. While it is true that the training manager was remiss in not advising the superintendent that the training program had begun, it is equally apparent that the superintendent was too detached from day-to-day operations for adequate control. Furthermore, and more fundamental, he had not created a departmental organization to keep himself apprised of its activities.

This is a case of line management endeavoring to fix the responsibility for an embarrassing circumstance upon the

⁵⁴ Allen, op. cit., p. 123.

staff, when in reality, it should be shared by the line and the staff.

Staff fails to see the whole picture. This complaint contends staff people tend to operate in terms of the limited objectives of their own specialty only, rather than in the interests of the business as a whole. This certainly is a definite staff short-coming when it exists. It is desirable that the staff specialist have some experience in the line so that he may know its problems and understand the kind of organizational relationships necessary to its successful operation. It is a management responsibility to insure that all organizational units are qualified to perform their assigned tasks properly. Dale suggests that

a number of companies make line experience a pre-requisite for staff work. Where such an arrangement is not possible, an apprenticeship as 'assistant to' a line executive might be arranged. In most instances it will be desirable for the staff specialist to spend some time in getting acquainted with the line executives and in finding out their problems before making any recommendations.⁵⁵

In fairness to staff, it must be pointed out that this short-coming is not peculiar to them. Perrin Stryker observed that this was also a line problem when he wrote the following:

The increasing complexity of business has loaded management with specialists, few of whom have much knowledge of--or interest in--overall management. Up through the twenties, production men generally got

⁵⁵Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure, pp. 76-77.

most of the top posts; then salesmen took over the reins. This was no great handicap so long as the only conscious goals of business were profits and satisfied customers. But since the thirties the specifications for a good executive have been broadened to include not only the handling of public and labor relations, but responsibility to the community as well. The result is that many top executives have acquired an impelling self-consciousness about their responsibilities, and such critical introspection has lead many to realize the weakness in their own ranks.⁵⁶

Judging from this observation, and the recent promotions of staff people to the position of chief executive in the Chrysler Corporation, General Electric, and the Ford Motor Company--the latter who was subsequently selected to be the Secretary of Defense--leads to speculation that the staff may have acquired "the whole picture" more completely than their line contemporaries.

The Staff Viewpoint

Line does not make proper use of staff. This is one of the opinions voiced by the staff people. Probably there is a close interrelationship between this complaint of the staff and those of the line. For example, the staff claims that some line executives who most need their specialized help fail to utilize it either because they are afraid of interference or do not appreciate the help that is available for the asking. Other line managers who seek the assistance of staff often

⁵⁶ Perrin Stryker and the editors of Fortune, A Guide to Modern Management Methods (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 21.

reject staff recommendations either because of personal inability to accept advice or distrust of the staff advisors. Still other line managers who are strong, dominant personalities and very capable individuals do not feel that they need any staff assistance.

Those staff people who are responsible for advice and counsel do not have any authority to force their service upon the line. When line can function effectively and efficiently without certain staff services, management should re-examine the need for such staff people. However, if the line performance is sub-optimal, management is failing in its responsibility to employ all the resources at its command--which includes the talents of its staff personnel.

Line resists new ideas. Many staff managers believe that line management is short-sighted and tends to resist new ideas in favor of the status quo. Behavioral scientists tell us that this frailty is not an exclusive characteristic of the line but a common human failing. This concept for complacency and the failure to adjust or accept the need for adjustment projected into organizational theory is the very theme of this thesis.

Line does not give staff enough authority. This is a complaint that normally has its origin when management violates some attribute of organization. Consider the following typical case as an example:

The job description of a staff safety director usually reads: "charged with the responsibility for safety". How can this be? The responsibility for safety can

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only rest with the line manager, any other assignment of such responsibility is unnatural because efficiency of operation (a line responsibility) and safety are inseparable.

Certainly staff members can be made responsible for promoting safety, training, investigation, reporting, and making recommendations. But until the safety staff has the authority to discipline line managers, the full responsibility for safety or the lack of it--must rest with line management.⁵⁷

This situation, which would typically give rise to the staff complaint of insufficient authority, presents an interesting analysis in organizational theory. The staff was assigned the responsibility for safety in the job description. The staff lacked authority to perform the task. For example, if the staff safety man observed a production worker operating a grinder without safety glasses, he is not empowered to compel the worker to stop the machine and obtain the safety glasses. His only recourse is to report this to the worker's superior for immediate action. Now, if management delegated authority to the safety staff to take corrective action when discrepancies were observed, would this violate any attribute of organization? Actually, it would, because more than one superior, not in the same chain of command, could then exercise authority over the same activity.

In this case, management was in error to assign such a responsibility to a staff, and therefore should be held accountable for whatever line-staff friction which might grow out of

⁵⁷ John B. Coyle, "Safety's Sacred Cows," American Machinist Metalwork Manufacturing, Jan. 9, 1961.

this situation. This goes back to the basic premise that staff cannot exercise authority over line functions. Brech summarized this point by noting that:

Neither the specialist head himself nor any of his staffs have any right to or share in the process of command in regard to the operational sections which their activities serve.⁵⁸

The important point of organizational theory illustrated here is that two individuals cannot share the same responsibility.

It matters not whether the differentiation be line or staff, Unit A or Unit B, worker 1 or worker 2, the basic premise remains that responsibility for a function, task or any sub-division thereof cannot be assigned to more than one individual. (One exception to this would be a group of individuals acting in concert on a problem, e.g., a conference).

Line-Staff Problem Areas

From the study of popular misconceptions of staff usage and the normal inter-line-staff conflicts, the next area to study would be the specific line-staff problem areas summarized in the preface. These are:

- a. The staff must be made more accountable.
- b. As the line grows arithmetically, the staff grows geometrically.
- c. Line-staff friction is an important inertial drag on the effectiveness of the organization.

⁵⁸ Brech, op. cit., p. 27.

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d. Line and staff is obsolete.

These are by no means all-inclusive of the line-staff problems but they highlight some major points that should be considered. Significantly, the last one, d, leads directly to the conclusions of this thesis.

The staff must be made more accountable. This particular problem was alluded to under the discussion of the line complaints that the "staff tends to assume line authority" and "staff does not give sound advice". This is an attitude, and quite properly so, that line is held more accountable for their activities because of the very nature of our accounting system which evaluates line performance in terms of dollar results. This cannot be disputed. It is also a major factor perpetuating the distinction between line and staff--that line contributes directly to generation of profits and staff contributes indirectly to this prime motivation of commercial enterprise. The crux of this problem was expressed by Edward C. Schleh, who wrote:

One of the prime problems with any decentralization process is that staff is basically not accountable for worthwhile accomplishment. Staff should be accountable for results that are going to help the Profit and Loss. Basically, staff should be accountable for helping the line. The weakness of many staff setups--particularly central staff--is that they have been allowed to get by with "advising", "coordinating", etc. These are statements of activity, and do not lead to strict accountability. As a consequence, staff has an inclination to develop more and more fancy procedures without feeling in any way fully accountable for the detrimental affect these may have on line.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Schleh, op. cit., p. 10.

There is truth in the comments of Mr. Schleh, however, they appeal to emotion and lack analysis in detail or a definition of the cause of the problem.

In the first place, it is difficult if not impossible to quantify the efforts of the staff. The staff often deals in intangibles. It might be pointed out that the inadequacies of the accounting system also benefits the line departments. For example, gross sales reports only those sales consummated; no measure of any kind is made of the sales that should have been made if the advertising campaign was more effective or the salesmen more efficient. These non-quantifiable items have an effect upon profit attainable but they are immeasurable.

Schleh's point that staffs tend to develop fancy procedures without regard to their affect upon the line was previously discussed under the topic of "staff does not give sound advice".

The major point of accountability is the key one. Again this returns to the basic attribute of control or supervision of the planned action. Control is "seeing that everything is being carried out in accordance with the plan which has been adopted, the orders which have been given, and the principles which have been laid down." Lacking a plan which enables evaluation of staff performance, or standards against which to compare, management must rely upon intuitive judgment to indicate the acceptability of staff performance. The intuitive judgment is triggered first by the operating results of the

organization, and secondly, by the opinions of the other departments to which the staff performs a service. If a problem is suspected or definitely recognized, management is responsible for initiating corrective action. If this capability is not "in-house", outside management specialists may be consulted.

This condition reflects upon the capabilities of management. The staff must be held accountable for their activities. Every member of the organization team has tasks to perform and management is responsible for the evaluation of the quality of performance by all concerned. There is no doubt that this is an area of weakness. Likert attacked part of this problem when he wrote that:

Virtually all companies regularly secure measurements which deal with such end results as production, sales, profits, and percentage of net earnings to sales. The accounting procedures of most companies also reflect fairly well the level of inventories, the investment in plant and equipment, and condition of plant and equipment.

But much less attention is given to what might be called "intervening factors", which significantly influence the end results just mentioned. These factors include such qualities of the human organization that staffs the plant as its loyalty, skills, motivations, and capacity for effective interaction, communication, and decision-making.⁶⁰

As the line grows arithmetically, the staff grows geometrically. Probably this should have been included in the section concerning misconceptions of staff usage. This criticism of staff growing like "Topsy" is occasionally encountered in

⁶⁰Rensis Likert, "Measuring Organizational Performance," Administrative Control and Executive Action, op. cit., p. 413.

essays on organizational problems; however, this allegation is never substantiated. Data on this problem are relatively scarce. However, Mason Haire reported in an article that:

The Bureau of Business Research at the Ohio State University has done a "nose count" of 211 Ohio companies employing an aggregate of about 40,000 people. Its findings indicate clearly that as the line grows arithmetically, the staff tends to grow arithmetically.⁶¹

The complaint exists where the staff has allegedly grown out of proportion to the line. The contention can be supported through the manipulation of statistics. For example, in a company which employs 2000 line and 200 staff employees, if 20 employees were added to both groups, the increase would be 1% for the line but 10% for the staff. The increased trend toward automation, EDPM and mechanized production lines, could very well demonstrate a greater need for staff types and a decreasing need for line workmen.

Regardless of the circumstance, the basic truth remains that the decision to supplement the line functions with staff services, by type and depth, is a management decision. Staffs do not reproduce themselves. Management must judge the need for staffs as well as their contribution to the operating results of the company.

Line-staff friction is an important inertial drag on the effectiveness of the organization. This was the comment of John Connor noted in the preface, and this was the essence of the

⁶¹Haire, op. cit., p. 34.

Koontz and O'Donnell quotation introducing this chapter.

It is evident that this is the end product of the line and staff complaints previously discussed. When animosity is permitted to flourish between these two organizationally distinct categories, the result can only be a reduction in operating efficiency. As concluded in the preceding section, and at the risk of repetition, the situation is normally the result of some violation of the attributes of organization on the part of management.

"The success of business management is a function of the nature of the leadership exercised in the organization."⁶² "The role of the chief executive becomes one of securing cooperation in the pursuit of the organizational objectives."⁶³ Management, particularly top management, must come to grips with this problem. It is recognized as a serious one although no data are available on the magnitude of the inertial drag.

The initial step of forward progress can be made by management through a re-examination of organizational structure and management policies in the light of the basic attributes of organization.

Line and staff is obsolete. The line-staff concept became firmly entrenched in American industry years ago when

⁶²F. A. Shull Jr., Selected Readings in Management (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1958), p. 307.

⁶³Waino W. Soujanen, "The Span of Control--Fact or Fable," Advanced Management, November 1955.

product lines were relatively stable, when companies manufactured a comparatively homogeneous product line, and when the factory was the center of operation. The growth in corporate size and the complexity of operations has created doubt in the minds of some as to the across-the-board application of this concept. Recall in the definition of line and staff, the distinction was made as direct and indirect contribution to the generation of corporate profit. For example, in many companies such as our hypothetical one, manufacturing and sales were the "sacred cows" of the organization. These were the line departments, and all that was not-line was designated as staff, whose sole justification for existence was to assist the line. This philosophy gave rise to the old cliché that "the staff exists to serve the line."

Modern corporate life however, does not always foster the homogeneous and stable product line, and the hub of corporate life is not necessarily the simple factory. Product and service "mix" has become the active ingredient to insure corporate growth. Diversification of products and services has been achieved through "in-house" creativity or through corporate merger. The "in-house" creativity refers to research, development, and engineering. And the feasibility study of corporate mergers is a responsibility of the finance department. These functions have become the very core of profit and loss opportunity for many large commercial organizations today. But remember, that research, development, engineering, and finance are categorically considered as staff or advisory functions under the line-

staff concept. Fisch, who proposed the thought that line and staff is obsolete, concludes:

Surely there must be something wrong with a concept which treats as advisory or support groups, those functions that create the hub of today's manufacturing enterprises.⁶⁴

His article contains many conclusive specifics on the problem relating to the functions of finance, purchase, labor relations, manufacturing, and sales. It must be borne in mind, however, that this attack on the line-staff concept is not universal. It is directed only to large corporate type of enterprises where the contribution toward the achievement of the organizational goals is diffused.

Fisch makes note of what he considers to be the five main criteria essential to effective organization. These are:

- a. Proper emphasis must be placed on the truly important functions of any enterprise, whether its objectives be profit or, as in government, efficiency.
- b. People at work must be aided, not hindered, by the organizational structure under which they operate.
- c. The organization must be able to adapt to changing circumstances.
- d. Relative simplicity of operations must replace complexity and duplication where these now exist.
- e. Proper balance must be achieved among these logical functioning groupings.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Fisch, op. cit., pp. 67-79.

⁶⁵Ibid.

These criteria appear to be most desirable in concept and have application to any organization. Further, they are in consonance with the theme of this thesis. However, in employing these criteria, Fisch proposes the adoption of what he terms the "functional-teamwork" concept in lieu of the line-staff concept. This entails a division of the organization into three major components along functional lines: (1) process functions, (2) resources control functions, and (3) relations functions. This concept requires a great change in management thinking and organizational alignment.

It is suggested that similar results could be obtained through abolishing the distinction between line and staff and resolutely applying the attributes of organization.

Powerful forces and conflicting interests are at work in all forms of organization. . . . If, however, the purposes of the enterprise are clearly formulated, if the goals are definite, indoctrination effective, and the norms of performance simply stated, then the problem is less difficult.⁶⁶

To this I would add that all the necessary tasks must be defined and assigned with the necessary authority; that management direct maximum formal coordination and encourage maximum informal coordination at the lowest practical organizational level; and that management exercise sufficient control over operations to insure conformance to the plan and such modifications be implemented as circumstances dictate.

The major point of this discussion, however, is that the

⁶⁶ Dimock, op. cit., p. 225.

line-staff concept is restrictive and a contributing factor to inefficiency in operations through friction. Management must re-examine their organizations to determine whether this condition is true of their organization.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

As indicated in the preface, this thesis has endeavored to define the species within the genus staff, and examine the relationships of the staff units with their organizational "opposites"--the line units. This was attempted with a particular reference to the attributes of organization.

Many points were covered in this presentation which bear repetition now as a preamble to the conclusions to be drawn from the discussions presented. Most notable of these points are the following. Staff units may be identified by structural alignment or by function. Line and staff units are differentiated by the direct and indirect contributions made to achieve organizational goals. There are many misconceptions of staff usage. The situations giving vent to line-staff friction can normally be identified with violations of the attributes of organization. Another contributing factor to the line-staff friction is the inordinate emphasis on accountability of the line units through the profit and loss statements without a comparable emphasis on accountability for the staff units.

It must be recognized that "an organization is a living and dynamic entity. Each activity is born, has its periods of

CONCLUSION

As indicated in the previous, this study was conducted to determine the effect of the use of the "Opposition" and "Support" methods on the learning of the "Opposition" and "Support" methods. The results of the study are as follows:

1. The use of the "Opposition" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Opposition" method.

2. The use of the "Support" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Support" method.

3. The use of the "Opposition" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Support" method.

4. The use of the "Support" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Opposition" method.

5. The use of the "Opposition" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Opposition" method.

6. The use of the "Support" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Support" method.

7. The use of the "Opposition" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Opposition" method.

8. The use of the "Support" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Support" method.

9. The use of the "Opposition" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Opposition" method.

10. The use of the "Support" method resulted in a significant increase in the learning of the "Support" method.

experimental development, of vigorous and stable activity, and, in some cases, of decline."⁶⁷ The very nature of the growth of these dynamic organizations, civilian and military, created the need for specialized assistance. Because the need was first realized in the military, where the prerogatives of command are jealously guarded, the introduction of the staff was made a separate and distinct entity from the line and the authority to command. This was the conceptual relationship at the time of origin and unfortunately, it has not changed down through the years.

Today, the very condition that created the need for staff service--size and complexity of organization--creates the need to reevaluate this line-staff concept. It has become virtually a sacred institution to those involved in organizational planning, particularly among the layment planners in the everyday working situation who always seem to be the last to recognize and understand the changing trends.

The trend has been identified. The realities of organizational life tend to disprove the fundamental distinction made between the line and the staff. Many organizational units which have been designated as staff are playing important roles daily in sustaining the growth of the modern corporation, and more significant, oft-times the success of these staff efforts may even determine the very existence of a corporation. Research,

⁶⁷ L. Gulick and L. Urwick, Papers on the Science of Administration, Institute of Public Administration, Columbia University, 1937.

Development, Engineering, and Finance were cited as specific staff functions to illustrate this point.

There can be no doubt that there is a gradual evolution which is altering the relative emphasis on organizational units. This is not a new or startling thought. Everything changes in time. The staff units have become more important to the success of organizations. This is a fact of life. Large organizations could not exist in today's competitive market without the operational refinements made available through staff services.

The post-war era saw research scientists and engineers--men who could create new markets and revitalize old ones through new products and product improvement--emerge as key figures in the corporate drama. Their role will continue to grow in importance.⁶⁸

The corporate organization is a team--a team on which all members are important to the success of the team effort. When distinctions are made that one group of players is more important than another, morale is affected and the total team potential is lowered. This represents by analogy what is happening in the industrial world. This is a large part of the line-staff friction which places an inertial drag on the effectiveness of the organization.

What is the solution? The solution is the major conclusion of this thesis. The line-staff concept has outlived its usefulness. It is time to dismiss the words "line" and

⁶⁸ George W. Chane, "The Changing Role of Administrative Management," The Management Review, December 1960, p. 25.

"staff" from our vocabulary along with all the organizational relationships that these words have come to represent. There are no first class and second class members or units in an organization.

In lieu of identifying a worker or an organizational unit by line and staff, workers and units should be identified solely by their assigned tasks. Thus, workers would be exclusively identified as machinists, accountants, etc.; and organizational units would be identified solely as Sales, Finance, Research, Industrial Relations, and so forth. No distinction should be made as to the direct and indirect contribution to the organizational objectives of the enterprise.

Further, management should not be burdened with the inflexibility that can result from organizational theory relating to staffs. There is no standard organization. Management should assign responsibility and authority to any member of its organization if that is in the best interests of operating efficiency. The designation of "staff" can work contrary to this philosophy.

The second conclusion is that there is a dire need for a greater application of the basic attributes of organization in organizational planning. This is closely interrelated with the first conclusion to abolish the line-staff concept. Mere abolition of line and staff will not, in itself, correct the problems stemming from the friction it has created. The root of the friction is more fundamental and goes much deeper than

the names or designators that have been attached to these groups.

Where conditions in organizations are such that complaints or attitudes of antagonism exist between the line and the staff, the basic cause normally can be found in a violation of some attribute of organization. Given these conditions, it is not inconceivable that such conflicts can just as likely exist between line units, or among staff units themselves.

The attributes violated most frequently are responsibility, authority, control, and coordination. I believe that most of the difficulties stem from a lack of coordination in organizations, particularly, the absence of encouragement from management for informal lateral relations. Allen observed that "In some companies line and staff mesh smoothly together. They work as a coordinated team."⁶⁹ Mooney called coordination the first principle of organization because "this term expresses the principle of organization in toto."⁷⁰ In further support of this belief relating to coordination, Mary Parker Follett wrote that:

The fair test of business administration, of industrial organization, is whether you have a business with all its parts so coordinated, so moving together in their closely knit and adjusting activities, so linking, inter-locking, inter-relating, that they make a working unit, not a congeries of separate pieces. In the businesses I have studied, the greatest weakness is in the relation of the departments.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Allen, op. cit., p. 120.

⁷⁰ Mooney, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷¹ Mary Parker Follett, "Coordination," Classics in Management, ed. Harwood F. Merrill (New York: American Management Association, 1960), p. 337.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the
 treatment on the growth of the fish. The fish were divided into
 two groups: a control group and a treatment group. The control
 group was fed a standard diet, while the treatment group was
 fed a diet supplemented with the treatment. The fish were
 kept in tanks under similar conditions. The growth of the
 fish was measured by weighing them at regular intervals.
 The results showed that the treatment group grew significantly
 faster than the control group. This suggests that the
 treatment has a positive effect on the growth of the fish.
 The study was conducted over a period of six weeks. The
 fish were weighed at the beginning and end of the study.
 The average weight of the control group at the end of the
 study was 100 grams, while the average weight of the
 treatment group was 150 grams. This difference is
 statistically significant. The study was repeated three
 times to ensure the results were consistent. The results
 of the three repetitions were similar. The treatment
 group consistently grew faster than the control group.
 The study was conducted in a laboratory setting. The
 fish were kept in tanks with filtered water. The
 temperature of the water was kept constant. The
 lighting was also kept constant. The fish were fed
 at the same time each day. The study was
 conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the
 Institutional Review Board. The results of the study
 are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Growth of fish in control and treatment groups.

Table 2. Growth of fish in control and treatment groups.

Table 3. Growth of fish in control and treatment groups.

Table 4. Growth of fish in control and treatment groups.

Though the reader may differ with this opinion, there appears to be no latitude for disagreement on the conclusion that most management practices which sustain line-staff conflict stem from poor organizational planning and the improper application of the attributes of organization. In the final analysis, "the success of business management is a function of the nature of the leadership exercised in the organization."⁷²

⁷² Shull, op. cit., p. 307.

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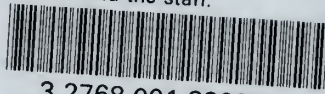
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